

Smart Dating  
Academy



# The 4 Commandments of Online Dating Success

By Bela Gandhi



# Table of Contents

Welcome	3
Commandment ONE	4
Commandment TWO	9
Commandment THREE	11
Commandment FOUR	13
Tips for Men	14
Tips for Women	15





# Welcome!

Like it or not, online dating is here to stay, and can be a fantastic way to meet people, done correctly! American singles use online dating and social networking sites to meet new people. A recent statistic touts that 30% of all married couples in 2014 met online. Amazing, right? One out of three! If you're saying to yourself – phew! I have a shot! – You're right. You do. However, that being said, it's not as simple as “winking” at someone you're attracted to, or sending a friendly email / invite for drinks.

Online dating, actually dating in general, is a process – a process to be taken seriously. You should take this search for a mate as seriously as you would take a job search and approach it with the same level of strategy and planning. Your dream guy or gal is probably not going to deliver your pizza or spontaneously appear next to you in the grocery line. There are four crucial steps you need to perfect to make it to the actual “in person” date.

1. First, you need a very effective profile and pictures of yourself.
2. Second, you need to learn to write an effective email that lets someone know that you're interested in them and why they should be interested in you.
3. Third, you need to have a good phone call that reaffirms everything they were hoping for – the first live contact.
4. Finally, you need to have a stellar first date that lands you a second date.

And believe it or not, if you do these things right, you'll find that not only are you choosing better people to contact, you're writing better emails, you're enjoying get-to-know you phone calls and you're having better dates...AND you're being your true and wonderful self throughout. So let's get to it and get you online successfully!



All the best,

**Bela Gandhi**

Founder

Smart Dating Academy





# Commandment ONE

## COMPOSE AN EXCELLENT PROFILE AND USE GREAT PHOTOS

**S**o what's it going to take? What will get you through the door, the first hoop – or through the online dating “screen”? It's simple: your profile.

Your online profile is your personal advertisement in cyberspace. You need to make it stand apart from all the other online profiles – so that the real, wonderful you shines through and stands out. You are going to be compared to everyone else – so you need to make sure that your profile is enticing and doesn't make the guy or girl reading it want to go in search of something else more enticing. You know who you are – your best qualities, your fun life stories! Now you just need to convey those qualities in your profile so that people will not only email you, but will also be predisposed to see you in that light when they meet you.



In trying to create this personal ad for yourself, here are some simple tips to keep in mind when putting your profile together that will make it memorable and true to you:

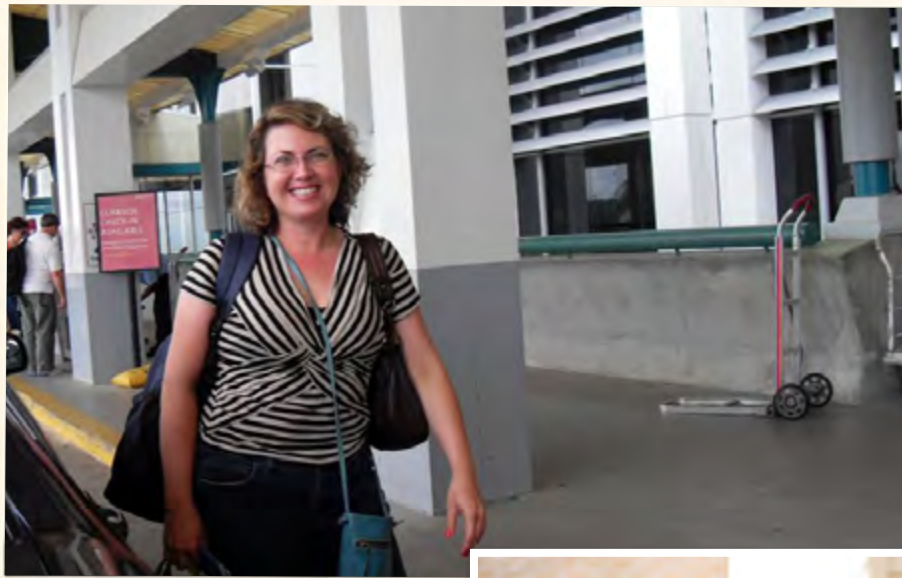
1. **Pick five key attributes about yourself that you want to highlight** – the things about yourself that are most important. Just pick them and keep them in mind when reading the next tips.
2. **Tell your unique, original stories to show off your key attributes.** Don't just say "I'm kind, smart and loving." (As a rule – lists like this are a no-no!) Instead, say, "I'm the one who will make you my Grandma's secret "Chicken Soup" recipe from scratch when you get sick." Or instead of describing yourself as "adventurous and spontaneous," say "Do you know anyone who has won a state-wide hula hoop contest? Well, if not, now you do."
3. **Show, don't tell.** Don't just tell people you like a night out on the town. Show them what you do when you go out – like, "You'll find me singing "Heartbreaker" at live karaoke night" or "I'm trying to find the perfect filet mignon in Chicago. Five top steakhouses down – next up is Gene and Georgetti's."
4. **Show your warm side.** It isn't all about showing off your best attributes. People are also looking for a little tinge of the warm fuzzies too. Make sure you show your softer side, whether you do it by talking about how you're looking forward to having someone to snuggle with watching "It's a Wonderful Life" on Christmas Eve, or by talking about how you take your niece to "The American Girl Doll" store for tea every November. Showing your warm side adds something special to the profile.
5. **Have fun!** Keep negativity OUT. Honesty is good – but if it means you're going to spell out the failings of your past relationships, or how you're tired of feeling lonely – then honesty is not always for the best. If you're down, depressed, or bitter because you just got out of a relationship – keep it to yourself. Do not say, "If you're looking for a booty call, I'm not your girl." Or, "If you're a gold digger, please keep looking." Not many people will respond to negativity.
6. **Be honest.** By the same token, one of the biggest complaints in online dating is that so many people LIE in their profiles. Have the confidence and self-awareness to be who you are and not describe someone you think you should be. Don't lie about your height, age, or anything. It will likely backfire at some point.
7. **No bragging.** There is often a fine line between confidence and cockiness. Be cognizant of how you sound.

8. **Spell-check and grammar check.** People will judge your intelligence by the way you write – yes it's true. Many sites don't have spell-check features. Copy the text into Microsoft Word, and run Spell/Grammar check, or have a trusted (and smart) friend proof-read it!
9. **Pick a memorable user name.** Instead of "chicagoguy23", try something like "TallDivingMan" instead, if you are tall and like to skydive! It works!
10. **Post great photos.** Studies show that people are 14 times more likely to look at a profile with photos. That being said – there are some basic rules to consider when posting photos:
  - a. Put up CURRENT photos. Photos should be no more than one year old.
  - b. Put up GREAT photos. Get professional shots taken (call us if you'd like), or ask a friend who is good at photography to do it! My secret tip is to use 5 of these shots (in different clothes if possible). Your first shot is your headshot (looking directly at the camera, smiling, and clear), and the rest can be a mixture of headshots and body shots. Yes, you HAVE to have body shots.
  - c. If you mention a sport/hobby in your profile, put up a picture of you doing it!
11. **Don't post selfies taken in the mirror.** Tacky.
12. **Don't include pets, other people, kids in your photos.** You and only you!!

So, if you're going to work on your profile – keep these above tips in mind and you're well on your way to making a great first impression and getting that first email. AND, we have a before/after profile at the end of this lesson – so you can see a great profile in action! ■



# Before and After Photos



**Before**

**After**





# Before and After Photos



**Before**



**After**

“After” photos were professionally taken at Smart Dating Studios, Chicago. We are happy to report that the online makeover resulted in our beautiful client finding love.

[www.SmartDatingAcademy.com](http://www.SmartDatingAcademy.com)





# Commandment TWO

## WRITE AN ENGAGING EMAIL

**C**onsider this first email to someone you're interested in to be like a cover letter you're writing to a prospective employer. You want that person to know not just that you are interested in them, but that your qualities make you someone they would like to meet.

If you're going to be brief (and I recommend brevity over novel-length emails any day!) – make sure the email has punch, and most importantly, will make them smile. Wit is the key!



1. **This is like starting a conversation with someone.** Find something unique/obscure in their profile (besides their attractive photo!) that interests you to comment on. This lets them know that you both read their profile and that you have something in common with them. If they mention they love chocolate, tell them you make a mean chocolate raspberry torte. If they say they love U2, tell them you were close enough at the 360 tour to get hit with a drop of Bono's sweat. Feel free to also tell them they have beautiful eyes or a great smile if that's what you first noticed...no need to be coy.
2. **Make them smile.** This should be a goal of any introductory email. Use something in their profile to make a joke about – not to make fun of them – but to make them smile. It's OK to be playful.
3. **Don't just reiterate your own profile.** Assume they've read it. Instead, use this email as an opportunity to highlight things you might have in common even if they weren't in your own profile.
4. **Be confident and don't throw yourself at them.**
5. **If you don't know how to end it, or are contemplating asking them to call you (DON'T!)** – just end with a question about something in their profile. “Have you ever been snorkeling in Turks and Caicos?” Save the phone number exchange for a later email – the first email is too soon! Ask open ended questions to keep the conversation flowing! ■







# Commandment THREE

## HAVE A GREAT PHONE CONVERSATION

**E**ver noticed how after a first phone conversation with a person you have an immediate impression of who they are? Thankfully I ignored my first impression of my husband on the phone – but I remember thinking, “good Lord, does he think we’re conducting a business transaction?”

Too often though, people don’t give a second chance after a phone conversation that doesn’t go well. So in this personal search for love, it might be a good idea to brush up on your phone conversation skills.



Let's run through some basic tips:

1. **Make sure you call from a phone with good reception.** Lots of people don't have landlines these days – but if you're using a cell phone, make sure to stay in one spot where you have bars! Don't jump on an elevator, or take it underground, or drive through parts of town where your calls always drop.
2. **Stay positive. Even if you've had a bad day.** Your boss was nagging you, your car broke down, your taxi driver chose the slow route to your gym, or if your goldfish died, keep those downers to yourself. Keep an upbeat tone. These are all things that you can tell them about when you've made it past these early stages and they have already decided they love you for who you are.
3. **Make them feel good!** No need to gush. But tell them their call brightened your day, or you loved their reference to Seinfeld in their last email to you.
4. **Give thoughtful responses.** Which highlight your positive qualities. If they ask you how your day was – take the opportunity to tell them something you want them to know about you. “My day was great, actually. I finished my entire to-do list for a change, and was able to make it to the gym after work with my neighbor and take my favorite spin class.” This tells them you work hard, have friends, and that you're into fitness. Three attractive qualities.
5. **Be fun.** Try to keep the banter light and neutral. Pick non-offensive, but fun and interesting topics to talk about.
6. **Know when to end the call.** If you sense the conversation dwindling, don't just let it end with both of you sounding bored. End on an up note – “The timer on my baked chicken just went off – I'm so sorry, but I need to run now. I really enjoyed speaking with you. I'd love to talk again soon!”
7. **Finally – give them your full attention.** Don't check emails, go to the bathroom (seriously!), empty the dishwasher, or anything else that might distract you from what they are saying. It makes a huge difference. ■



# Commandment FOUR

## MAKE IT A GREAT FIRST DATE

**P**ages and pages could be written about the dos and don'ts of first dates. Here, we will give you the best of the best tips to get your motor running.



## Tips for Men on First Dates

1. **Look and smell great!** Grooming and appearance are so important to women – as you well know! Being freshly showered with just a dash of cologne (careful not to overdo!) and great breath is wonderful. Wear neutral, high quality pieces. A sport coat is a great addition over jeans or slacks (we love that!!)
2. **Be a good conversationalist.** Don't forget to really listen to your date, and ask good, relevant questions about her. There is probably nothing a woman likes more than being really listened to. It makes her feel important and a high priority.
3. **Plan the date.** Women want a guy who is confident enough to make a decision. Put some real thought into it and present your date with a suggested plan. A place with great ambiance, reasonably priced, and good food!
4. **Be a gentleman.** We love chivalry. Love, love, love. Open restaurant doors, pull out her chair, help her with her coat.
5. **Be courteous.** Be on time to pick her up / meet her.
6. **Be fully attentive.** Pay attention to her only – even if there are groups of cuties from a bachelorette party sitting next to you. Ladies have a sharp radar for this.
7. **Be fun.** Playful conversational banter is good. Caution: Be careful of coming off as too opinionated, provocative, competitive, or judgmental.
8. **Be cool.** Even if it was the best date you've ever had, and you want to run off to Vegas and marry her that night, don't ask her to come back to your place. If you really feel like she liked you as well, call her the next day for the 2nd date!
9. **DO NOT bring up taboo topics.** Everyone says it for a reason - never discuss politics, religion, exes, sex, poor family relationships or other personal baggage on a first date.
10. **Drink moderately.** Pace yourself – girls watch for this!
11. **The grand finale.** Pay for the date unless you are really scraping at the moment. ■





## Tips for Women on First Dates

1. **Be feminine.** Dress beautifully - in a dress or skirt if you're comfortable in this. Something figure flattering, but not too low, too high, or too tight. Elegant.
2. **Smile a lot.** Happy, confident people attract the most people.
3. **Be warm, and genuinely interested in your date.** There is nothing more flattering to a person than sincere interest in them.
4. **Give your date appropriate, gentle touches on the shoulder, elbow, or arm.** These small, innocent gestures tell him that you like him. Certainly, greeting him with a hug is a great way to show right off the bat that you're a warm and inviting person.





5. **Think of funny/interesting stories about yourself that cast you in a good light!** A date is the chance to “market the good points about you!”
6. **Be appreciative** - “It was so nice of you to pick me up! I love this restaurant. Great job with picking it!” One of the things a lot of guys complain about is a woman who barely says “thank you” or shows any appreciation. Be genuine and lavish in your appreciation.
7. **Do the “purse grab” and genuinely offer to split the bill!** Even though a guy asks you out – still reach for your purse with an offer to help pay. Most guys will insist on paying — but it’s always a good habit to offer. Shows that you’re a nice girl.
8. **Don’t be bossy, argumentative, prickly or combative.** The majority of men are looking for someone soft, nurturing, warm, and playful. Playful, flirty banter is good, but there is a fine line between being argumentative, combative and even “the one upper.”
9. **Don’t order anything too “high maintenance”** (e.g. – ordering a Cobb salad and eliminating everything but the lettuce!) - or send food back unless it’s egregiously bad. Don’t be pushy to the waitress, either.
10. **Don’t discuss religion, politics, exes, family drama, personal baggage.**
11. **Don’t drink too much** - you want to remember the night!
12. **Don’t ask him things like:** “What kind of car do you have?” or “Where do you live and how many bedrooms do you have in your place?”
13. **Don’t make him think you are “interviewing” him** (i.e. firing “checklist” questions about him). If this is going to work, you want to get to know him as him first....

Keep these tips in mind. But most of all, have fun. You might be on a date with your future spouse. ■

# About the Author



Bela Gandhi is the Founder and President of the Smart Dating Academy, one of the nation's top date & relationship coaching firms (that averages two committed relationships/engagements per month). Smart Dating Academy provides busy, successful professionals with date coaching, image consulting, personal shopping, professional photography and online dating consulting - we teach singles how to date smarter and to find love! Called "The Fairy Godmother of Dating!" by the Huffington Post and Steve Harvey, she is the dating expert on the Steve Harvey show, for Match, and a correspondent on most major networks including NBC, ABC, CBS, Fox, and has been featured in Glamour, CNN, The Wall Street Journal and more. Prior to founding the Smart Dating Academy, Bela worked for 12 years as a top global executive for Akzo Nobel, a large multinational corporation. Bela Gandhi has two degrees from The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (Finance and German), and is happily married with 2 children. Bela has been volunteering for the Cara Program since 2007, was the President of it's Associate Board (turning it into a revenue producing board for TCP) and now sits on their Executive Council. She has also been actively involved with Step Up Women's Network, and supports numerous non-profits both locally and nationally.



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